Fellowship in Prayer

"For a world united in prayer"

The time of labor does not with me differ from the time of prayer; and, in the noise and confusion of the kitchen where I am at work, while several persons are at the same time calling for different things, I possess God in as great tranquillity as if I were upon my knees...

— Brother Lawrence

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OUR PURPOSE

"To promote the practice of prayer among *all* religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God, regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind."

FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

22 E. 29th Street New York 16, N.Y.

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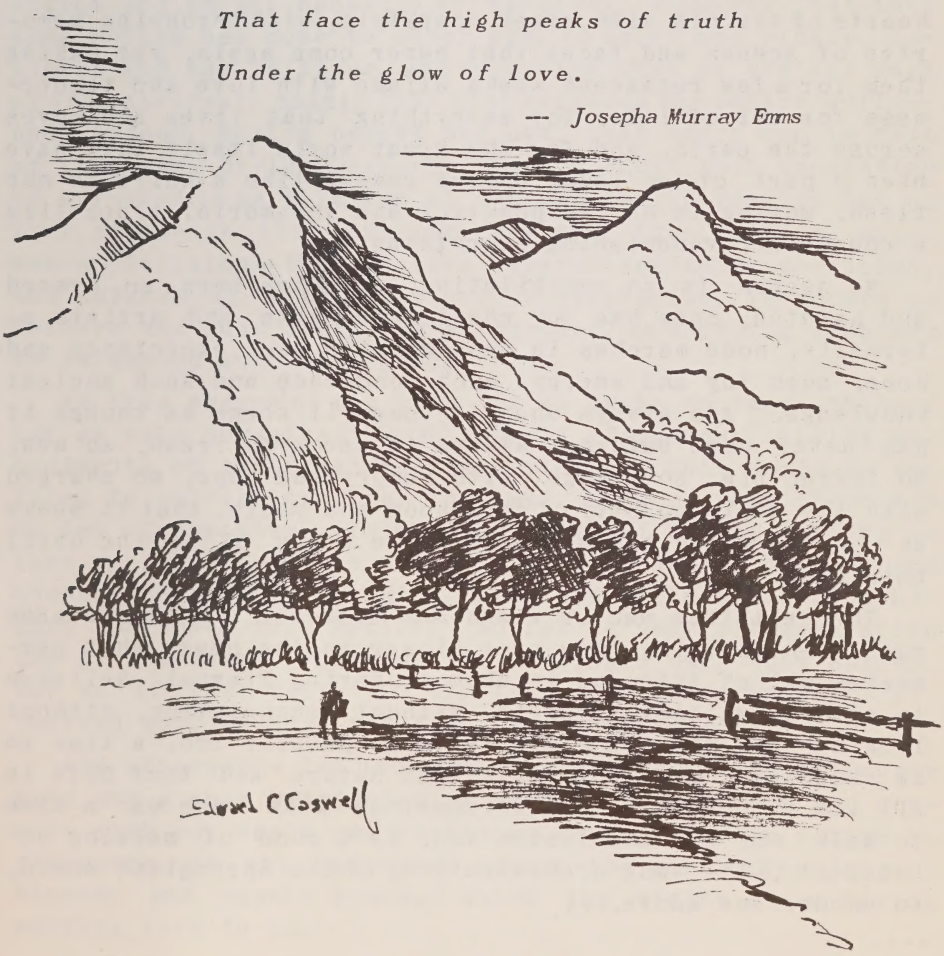
Above
The graves of fear
Lie our gardens of hope
That face the high peaks of truth
Under the glow of love.

— *Josepha Murray Emms*



IN SPRING...THE ONENESS OF LIFE

Once again Spring pounds and leaps and surges across the breast of the world, caressing us, beckoning, renewing, calling to something deep and buried in us, something ancient and perennial, obliviating winter's image, denying winter, making it seem as if winter had never been. Spring comes again, plummeting into the veins of youth immortal yearnings, filling them with a sense of eternity and a conviction that there is no death for them, that they will live forever. Spring comes, moving in upon our lives in waves of bliss, thrusting at us remorselessly, prodigal and beauteous, blazing intolerably in garden and meadow, stabbing the hearts of the old with cruel nostalgia, with throbbing memories of scenes and faces that never come again, yet making them for a few renascent weeks aflame with love and tenderness for all of life, for everything that lives and moves across the earth, and for the great world itself they have been a part of so long. Spring comes, like a knife in our flesh, moving in on its powerful and immemorial tides like a conqueror, vanquishing everything.

No season is so annihilating, none has been so hymned and painted, none has so challenged poets and artists eternally, none marches in upon us with such expectancy and hope, such joy and energy, such innocence and such ancient knowledge. And always when it comes it seems as though it has never come before. Always it seems so fresh, so new, so invincible, so fraught with memory and hope, so charged with the whole country of childhood and youth, that it seems as if the earth had never seen the glory of Spring until this year.

The religious man or woman may discover in this season much to help bring them ever closer to the power that permeates all of life and in whom is Spring Eternal. Religion is nothing without struggle, without renunciation, without longing; but there is a time to be passive too, a time to be receptive to the impress that Nature and that Life in all its invocations and whisperings make upon us; a time to walk and sit and listen and, in a mood of melting attunement to the vast orchestrations of the springtime world, to wonder and adore....

Let us choose some flawless golden morning and in nakedness of spirit walk out into the greening world, sinking our minds down into the great current flowing through the earth and through the blood of everything and everyone nourished by the earth. Let us think about God, and his creation, and man's short life, and the beauty of everything, and the greater Beauty of Him who created it all...

Let us put aside all our preconceptions and prejudices, all the useless mental baggage we carry around with us, all our impulses to feel superior, to persuade ourselves that we are among the saved, one of God's elect. Let us wash our minds of all narrowness, sectarianism and exclusive tendencies and in all honesty, all humility, remember that this same Spring has come to other men, to saint and sinner, believer and non-believer, and recognize that we are all part of the universal, cosmic life that pervades the entire world—and, indeed, worlds beyond our own; that every man is part of that same Divine Oneness. Let us admit that separation of any kind is an illusion of the ego and in reality has no true existence; that anything—any man, idea, action, movement or religion—that fosters separativeness or exclusion, and defends it with doctrines or prophecies, is doomed to failure and must disappear altogether, as anything grounded in falsehood must disappear.

At this season of the year let us dwell on these things. Let us make ourselves into vessels of Oneness, living embodiments of the Truth that everything in this world is related to everything else, that all is One, that there are no two of anything. (Is not the voice of Spring telling us that over and over? Is not this note of unity, harmony and oneness constantly sounding in the new world blossoming before our eyes this April?) So let us deny all separation and divisiveness. Let us, for a single day, this Spring, act as if that truth of all truths, uttered by every illumined soul through the ages, was really true.

And afterwards let us resume the struggle with a stronger mind and a pure heart—let us go back to our room and commune with our souls and in prayer and meditation strive to recapture, on the spiritual plane, the mood of universal harmony and cosmic oneness which the vision of a Spring morning gave to us.

« « » »

PROOF OF THE RESURRECTION IN THIS PRESENT LIFE

By W. J. Thompson, D.D.

The word "Resurrection" is rightly associated with life after death, but this certainly does not exhaust its full meaning. As thousands of lives demonstrate, there is a resurrection here and now in this present life.

This is the glory of Christianity — we do not have to wait for the end of our earthly existence to experience the marvelous fact of resurrection, for as we read in Colossians 2:12 — "Ye are risen with Christ through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead." It should be clearly understood that the resurrection of a human being is not confined to life beyond the grave. It is a radiant reality in this present stage of existence. Innumerable testimonies of men and women emphasize this truth.

I have listened to a man, with the light of heaven on his face and a thrill of joy in his voice, applying to himself II Corinthians 5:17.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

A man, miserable and defeated in spirit, broken in body and in will power, puts himself in the hands of God, and his life is completely changed: weakness changes to strength, vacillation to decision, darkness to light, captivity to deliverance, and sin to salvation. What this man could never do by his own strength is now an accomplished fact, by the grace and power of God!

This is indeed a genuine resurrection, confounding the skeptics and confirming the faith of all believers. Here was an individual "dead in trespasses and sins," now literally "raised to a new life." And we witness the proof of such "resurrections" through the centuries. A crafty individual named Zaccheus becomes a generous helpful soul; a violent unstable man called Peter is made firm as a rock; Saul, the persecutor, is transformed into Paul the Apostle of Christian faith!

And today, thousands upon thousands of men and women bear joyful testimony to the reality of Resurrection happening here and now, through faith in the Risen Lord!

"He that hath the Son hath Life" declares the Scripture. And this means that

Eternal Life is ours here and now.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have Eternal Life." (I John 5:13)

Surely this is plain enough.

I firmly believe in the reality of Resurrection beyond the grave—for our Lord has definitely assured us of this fact. And I just as surely believe in Resurrection in this present life on earth, for the Word of God declares this too!

"It is not something yet to be revealed -
The Everlasting Life; 'tis here and now,
Passing unseen because our eyes are sealed,
With blindness for the pride upon our brow.
It dwells not in innumerable years;
It is the Breath of God in timeless things -
The strong Divine Persistence that inheres
In Love's red pulses - and in faith's white wings."

For a great multitude of Christian men and women the proof of the Resurrection in this present life is found in the fact that they are experiencing it today! The unbeliever may deride this statement, and the skeptic may sneer, but the argument based on God's Word, and confirmed in human experience, is convincing evidence that "God hath given to us Eternal Life, and this Life is in His Son."

Some inquire whether Heaven is a place or a condition of mind. The answer is - it is both! Here on this earth (and heaven begins here and now) it is a state of mind and heart and soul; but in the Life beyond the grave, Heaven is a place.

The teaching of the Gospel is that Heaven begins here for all men and women as soon as they give themselves in faith to Jesus Christ. The limitations of the flesh and the imperfection of the world restrain those heavenly joys within certain limits; but in the final judgment - beyond our present existence - our capacity for joy will take on infinite proportions. God will lift up our poor incompleteness and make it a thing of marvelous beauty.

"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." (I Corinthians 2:9-10)

This, then, is the revelation - that through faith in Christ we enter upon the resurrection Life here and now - and that beyond the grave there awaits us a life of indescribable joy and splendor forever! « « » »

WISDOM--THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

By Rev. Roy Wallace Thomas

The experience of the man who has tried to drive a flock of lambs along winding mountain roads is so exasperating that he cannot relate it with equanimity. Such experiences were described to me one day in the mountains by a seasoned shepherd, who relieved his feelings and colored his narrative with many an explosive epithet.

The lambs rush blindly into every side-path they see—into the brush thickets along the creeks or high among the precipitous rocks—in fact, into a half-dozen diverging paths at once. The shepherd is a very busy man trying to guide his scattering lambs back into the road, only to have the same trial over again around the bend. But let him place five or six mature ewes at the head of his flock: the ewes will follow the highway sensibly, and the lambs will follow.

A mother bear in western Colorado took her cub out for a lesson in hunting, on a mountain slope whose reds and grays were tapestried with pinon, cedar and aspen. As she ambled along with her cub, alert to detect the scent of any dangerous creatures in the vicinity, she recalled, so the story goes, what she had heard certain gay cubs saying among themselves, and thus she ruminated: "Perhaps it is true that youth should experiment, heeding only their own impulses. I'll try it out and see."

And so she fell behind and let her cub pick the way. She ceased heeding the monitor of her instinct, even when her keen scent and mature sense told her there was danger from which she should take her cub at once. The cub, eager for larger acorns, redder berries, juicier roots, wandered far from the customary haunts, the mother bear not far behind. Suddenly a terrific sound echoed back from the canyon walls like a crack of thunder. The mother bear bolted into the brush and clambered to safety. Great was her dismay to find that her cub had not followed her. Retracing her tracks, she found only a pool of blood, and smelled the odor of guns and hunters. They had dashed away with the cub.

It may be true, as a distinguished orator used to say, "When the roll call which men have written is read, it will be found that the young men have ruled the world." The orator cited Victor Hugo, pre-

senting a poem to the French Academy at fifteen; Mozart, entrancing Germany at seventeen; George Washington, a major at nineteen; Beethoven's great name in music at twenty-one; Spinoza, excommunicated at twenty-three; Aeschylus, greatest tragic poet of Greece at twenty-five; Turner, a member of the Royal Academy at twenty-six; Bacon, counsel for the Queen at twenty-eight; and da Vinci, a master in marble, bronze and terracotta at thirty.

It is interesting to mention the brilliant feats of precocity, but perhaps it is more significant to list the mature achievements of the precocious: George Washington, President at fifty-seven and refusing a third term at sixty-five, gave his country a mature administration and a sound start as a new nation such as he could not have given as a youth. Victor Hugo was sixty when he published "Les Miserables;" da Vinci, fifty-one when he began the Mona Lisa. Beethoven, called by some critics "the greatest musician that ever lived," passed through a second and third period in his musical development, during which he drastrically revised his earlier work. And Lord Bacon was fifty-nine when he published "Novum Organum," his most celebrated work.

All lambs need the wisdom of the ewes, and no cub is safe without the mature care of its mother. No child is competent to bring up his parents. When parents surrender their duty and responsibility to their children, the result usually is delinquency. Despite the undoubted charm of youth, however precocious its leadership, mankind needs the guidance and security of mature wisdom. The truly mature man never forgets the lessons of his past or of history. This remembrance is essential to well-being and continued growth. As Santayana wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

A complete education, should make one aware of the major lessons of the past, not just those which flatter one's particular temperament. But it is a mistake to try to live in the past, since we were created for the present and the future. The archeologist who gives his health, wealth and time wholly to exploration of the geologic graveyards of the remote eras, who will go into ecstasy over a tiny artifact a million years old, but treats with childish venom the question, "What of survival beyond death?", is temperamentally incompetent for serving the deeper needs of the human spirit. The same

is true of all biased scholarship and thinking.

One is not fully wise until he knows what to do about the past, the present and the future. He will not choose the old merely because it is old, nor the new because it is new. He is like the man pictured in Jesus' parable, who had in his treasure what was new and what was old. The wise man has resolved the struggle between the new and the old. His choices are determined by worth and intrinsic quality. He is interested in *treasure*.

The law of wisdom is the law of happiness. The wise man has learned from his study of history, from his observation of life and from experience, how to live and how to be happy. He finds that happiness is not found in things, which is idolatry, but in the right use of things, which is pre-eminently a spiritual exercise. He seeks value, quality, meaning, and in so doing discovers the surpassing *treasure* which we call fulfillment. He finds that this fulfillment, this "precious possession," attained by obeying the laws of wisdom, is treasure that moth and rust cannot destroy nor thieves steal, because it is real and therefore eternal. His is the happiness of the man whose security is the eternal God.

REVELATION

Seeking, reaching, our hearts receive:
The veil or cloud is drawn aside
And open stands the door.

For one short moment we achieve.
The Truth that nothing now can hide
Illumines at the core.

Its Light may wane, but Faith will leave
The soul's horizon open wide,
Impervious now no more.

— *Mildred Long*

THE HEALING POWER OF BEAUTY

By Zelma S. Dennis

The heart responds to beauty when it is joyful. How often it can be helped when in distress by being receptive to beauty. How gracious and loving is the Creator of mankind that He placed man in a world where beauty is resplendent day and night.

He has inspired the artist, the musician and the poet in their various creative mediums to be a sesame, a magic power to open our hearts to the beauty surrounding us all. There are hours when the soul is veiled in a curtain of sorrow, but how many times the melodic fingers of music have lifted the veil and given release to the upwelling grief. There have been the experiences by men, caught in the midst of bewildering problems and mired in their own disbelief, when a few simple lines of a poet have broken in upon their minds like sunlight through the clouds of a despairing day.

The artist with his many-faceted tools for reproducing beauty has fashioned and designed loveliness, which is endowed with the power to refresh and renew mankind. All of this beauty is constantly awaiting man's senses to comfort, heal and enrich his life. Man could avail himself of all this, and renew his faith, if only he would sharpen his vision, heighten his perception and listen more acutely to God's world about him.

The psalmist in the past "lifted his eyes to the everlasting hills," and found beauty in their quiet strength and serenity. Each night the glory of the firmament with its glowing star-candles reveals new splendor. The tears of the morning are shining jewels upon the grass. The wondrous symphony played by the giant orchestra of wind and wave is the music of the sea...All of this is Beauty, walking beside every moment of our life.

And yet the greatest beauty of all lies deep in the eyes of our beloved ones where is revealed eternal love, making all life beautiful and giving us one of God's most cherished gifts. If we can allow the healing ministry of Beauty to lift our hearts and minds, we may in turn pass on to our fellowman a new way of living. »»»

THE FREE THINGS OF LIFE

By Ada Mae Hoffrek

So many of the good and beautiful things of life are free. Many, we have to work for, — and work hard, too. I know, because I have just come in from a long, hard day's work in my garden. If I do not plant, I will not have beautiful flowers — flowers that delight the soul and make happy the hearts of those I give them to. Tomorrow I must work hard again and plant vegetables. If I do not plant, I will not have nice, fresh, delicious corn, tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, beets and other vegetables. If I tend them faithfully and keep out the weeds and hoe and water regularly, I shall have vegetables to store in the cellar for the long, cold winter months ahead.

While I work, I also enjoy the free things of life. These free things can be beautiful if I take time to stop, look and listen. I hear the birds singing their sweet songs all day long while I am working; their music floats through the air until the late hours of the evening. I breathe in the fresh, clean air, so health-giving. I enjoy seeing the squirrels playing on the lawn while I work. One came right up to me and I could almost hear him say, "Don't forget, we like sweet corn." They do not have to remind me of their preference since they give ample evidence of it each season. They get their breakfast of sweet corn early in the morning hours — long before I am about. The cobs testify to their keen enjoyment of it. But I like to see them running about; so I plant some extra hills for them.

A pair of pigeons flit about my feet and seem to say, "We like to eat too." A big rabbit hops across the yard and stops for a moment as if to say, "Don't forget a row of lettuce for me." I won't disappoint him. Last year he brought his four little ones and their mamma to feast on the lettuce and then frolicked on the grass. Just to watch them was worth many rows of lettuce. Did you ever spend some time, especially in spring, walking by a brook and watching it and listening to it flow? I never fail to stroll by the brook on the farm where I grew up when I go there to visit. Right now the ferns are coming up on the banks and the maples and birches are in leaf. As I walk on, I can see the dogwood coming in

blossom, and small white violets are peeping out on both sides of the banks. Then I come to the old Swimming Hole. What memories as you stroll by an old familiar brook! I wish all my friends could enjoy this pleasure.

Have you ever walked through an apple orchard in bloom? It is another one of the glorious free things of life. It takes me back to the days when my father planted the orchard and later when we picked hundreds of barrells of apples each season. The trees are still standing like old soldiers on the field. They have done their duty but still stand guard.

Have you ever seen a pear orchard in bloom? Every year I stand and gaze in admiration at this spectacle in white. Or a peach orchard in bloom! What a breath-taking sight this ocean of pink is—If you have never seen it you have missed one of the most beautiful sights in nature. It never loses its fascination for me, every year it seems more beautiful.

So many beautiful things the springtime brings to us. Such sights to behold. Beauty for the soul! After the long, cold winter months, what a treat to behold the country in flower. What miracles God has wrought!

Let us be grateful to Him for giving us all these things to enjoy—so many gifts, all free.

If the worldly wise
could get but one taste,
they would forsake all else
and sit down with us
at the table of heavenly longing
which is never bare.

— Novalis

UNTAPPED FOUNTAIN

By Dawn Edwards

Prayer is such a deep subject, but such a vital one. We need physical food for physical strength, but prayer is the food of spirit, and to have spiritual strength we need that spiritual food obtained through speaking to God, which has been termed prayer, and listening to God, which has been termed meditation. Many thinkers, such as Menninger, Overstreet, Alexis Carrel and others, have stated that prayer is the great untapped power. And surely this is true. In this day, when we hear much about psychosomatic ills, neuroses and psychoses, it is well to remember the Holy One who said that spiritual (emotional) dis-ease requires a spiritual remedy. And who can prescribe better than the Great Physician? And if it is through prayer that we open our hearts to receive spiritual food, how marvelous that for this untapped bounty we do not have to wait in waiting rooms, nor call for appointments, nor pay expensive fees we perhaps can ill afford! The only requirements are faith, sincerity and surrender. And if we don't have these, we can earnestly long for them, ask for them, and they are already present in the asking!

In prayer, we attain detachment — that is, submission to the will of God. In prayer, we learn surrender — which only comes through love. And how can we love, except through knowledge of the Beloved? And how gain knowledge of the Beloved of all the worlds, except through the Words of those filled with His Spirit?

There are three degrees of faith — to confess with the tongue; to believe in the heart; and to show forth in our action. The important requirement is the love of God in the heart. We have faith when we speak to God in prayer; and we have faith when we listen to God in meditation.

Through prayer and meditation, we come more earnestly to desire spiritual progress and spiritual powers and attainments, such as the attributes of kindness, mercy, justice, love, integrity and peace. Such desire is greatly strengthened by aspiration, prayer and meditation and association with spiritual people.

Again, man cannot rise spiritually by his own unaided efforts. He needs power of the Holy Spirit for his soul's de-

velopment. This is attained through turning to God. The mysterious power called the grace of God is attracted to us by prayer, for through prayer we become a magnet, a vessel of Grace. Mohammed said: "Prayer is a ladder by which everyone can ascend to heaven."

With the tongue one expresses feelings to another man, but with the language of the heart one prays to God. When in prayer, we are using the language of spirit.

The wisdom of prayer is that it causes a connection between us and the True One, the source of all our good. It causes awakening and mindfulness and is conducive to protection and preservation in times of test. Thus admonishes Abdu-l'Baha, who learned this from his father, the great Prophet, Baha'u'llah. Prayer causes attraction to the Kingdom, and by such only, one's ability and capacity increase—spiritual capacity. And our reality being spirit, our true capacities "blossom."

As to the speaking of prayers: when the heart alone is speaking, the mind can more easily be disturbed, something one experiences in "holding the mind still" in meditation. When the heart and tongue are acting together, the mind is more concentrated. Thus, many prefer to intone prayers, just as many intone poetry. And in our dealings with others, if our mind, word and deed are in line with each other, we have integrity, we have concentrated power. Surely that is a constant state of prayer, and He who has said, "Make praise of Thee my action," must surely be pleased, and those around us can say, "You can put your faith in his word. He is a man of his word." And thus we understand that great ideal given us by the true Servants of the Beloved: "Know that nothing will benefit thee in this life save supplication and invocation unto God, service in His vineyard, and with a heart full of love, to be in constant servitude unto Him." That is my prayer for myself and for all listening hearts.

A friend is one to whom we may pour out the contents of our hearts, chaff and grain together, knowing that the gentlest of hands will sift it, keep what is worth keeping, and with a breath of kindness blow the rest away.

— From the Arabian

FROM THE D

(Selections from the ser

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.

All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—in those who harbor such thoughts hatred will never cease.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—in those who do not harbor such thoughts hatred will cease.

For hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love—this is an eternal law....

Earnestness is the path of Nirvana; thoughtlessness the path of death. Those who are in earnest do not die; those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.

Having understood this clearly, those who have progressed in earnestness delight in earnestness, and rejoice is the knowledge of the elect.

These wise people, meditative, steady, always exerting strong powers, attain to Nirvana, the highest happiness.

If an earnest person has roused himself, if he is not forgetful, if his deeds are pure, if he acts with consideration, if he restrains himself, and lives according to law—then his glory will increase.

By rousing himself, by earnestness, by restraint and control, the wise man may make for himself an island which no flood can overwhelm.

Fools follow after vanity. The wise man keeps his earnestness as his best jewel.

Follow not after vanity, nor after the enjoyment of sense pleasures and lust. He who is earnest and meditative obtains ample joy.

DHAMMAPADA

rmons of Gautama Buddha)

When the man of understanding drives away vanity by earnestness, he, the wise, climbing the terraced heights of wisdom, looks down upon the fools; free from sorrow he looks upon the sorrowing crowd, as one that stands on a mountain looks down upon them that stand upon the plain.

Earnest among the thoughtless, awake among the sleepers, the wise man advances like a racer, leaving behind the hack....

As a fletcher makes straight his arrow, a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard, difficult to hold back.

As a fish taken from his watery home and thrown on the dry ground, our thought trembles all over in order to escape the dominion of Mara, the tempter.

It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it lists; a tamed mind brings happiness.

Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very subtle, and they rush wherever they list; thoughts well-guarded bring happiness.

Those who bridle their mind, which travels far, moves about alone, is incorporeal, and hides in the chamber of the heart, will be free from the bonds of Mara, the tempter....

If a fool be associated with a wise man even all his life, he will perceive the truth as little as a spoon perceives the taste of soup.

If an intelligent man be associated for one minute only with a wise man, he will soon perceive the truth, as the tongue perceives the taste of soup.

If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.

One's own self conquered is better than all other people conquered; not even a god could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself.

WHERE DO RELIGIONS MEET?

By Swami Ritajananda

Our century has so many interesting characteristics that it is impossible accurately to describe the lives and aspirations of people of the modern era, or all the discoveries and inventions of scientific investigation. Many of the secrets of the outer world have been discovered and the intellectual stature of humanity has grown. The study of space has become an all-absorbing topic. Even the study of man is not lagging behind. New, startling discoveries about the electrical impulses of the brain suggest that we may soon adjust a human being to society like a machine. These are the tendencies in the modern world. People today are mostly outdrawn, with most of our activities related to the external world. In brief, science, economics and politics have become more important subjects of study than religion or philosophy.

The reason for this new attitude is that these subjects are all practical, they have some direct bearing on life, and are not based upon assumptions. Although there may be a revival of interest in religion, and churches are said to have good attendance, yet an unattached thinking man finds it hard to discover sufficient reasons why he should accept any organized dogmatic version of religion. He is apt to feel that religion is made up of assertions of facts about the external world which are not provable but yet should be given credence. There is a strong suggestion that one should not question the authenticity of these traditional statements. Thus many people find the only solution in blindly checking in themselves every impulse to question.

Although this attitude is very unpleasant and hurts those who are attached to religion, yet when we analyze the authoritarian presentations of the subject we find that they break down, that they cannot stand any critical study. If we put forward the argument that the founders of religions were not ordinary men but possessed of special powers and superior authority and were chosen to give a unique saving message, then each prophet naturally is equally great and there is no need of preaching one's religion to others who have their own prophets. What Buddha preached and what the New

Testament contains should lead to no conflicts.

It becomes all the more painful when a religious sect wants to preach that it alone has the Truth, which others do not have. No prophet can be considered to have a greater insight or a superior knowledge of the Truth than others.

If our generation is perplexed with questions relating to religion, it is because of modern religion's dependence upon authority and its tendency to introduce supernatural elements in support of its teaching. Religion has to give freedom for a rational inquiry into these teachings. We all know that a thoughtful, analytical inquiry helps in scientific progress, and we find no reason why the same method should not be used in the study of religion. If religious books have eternal truth, they need not be jealously guarded against inquiry, since truth should stand any amount of criticism or analysis.

Most people have their religion because they were born in it. One is a Hindu because his ancestors were Hindus and in the same way we have the followers of Judaism, Islam, Christianity, etc. Each becomes a heritage to be protected from the intruder. When all inquiries are prevented, however, people become extremely fanatical about their religion, and history gives us ample proof of how in the name of religion terrible wars were fought and tens of thousands killed.... all because God revealed two types of Truth to two different prophets. Even today we have not gone much beyond this.

People naturally wonder why, when we apply reason to all other plans and activities, we should not do the same even with religion. In all other fields we are able to find areas of common agreement. A Chinese scientist may win world recognition for his work, an Einstein will be regarded universally as a mathematical prodigy, a musician may be a follower of any religion and be admired by everyone. They are all treated with equal honor in their fields. It is quite different in matters of religion.

Further, God is generally believed to be a mysterious Person and we of today do not like very much mystery. God becomes connected finally with ideas which we do not understand and even the unbeliever says: "God only knows whether there will be sufficient rainfall this year." So He is for many a kind of "Sanctuary of Ignorance."

Considering all this, and

remembering the numerous ills brought about by fighting creeds and warring religious groups, many are prone to question the utility of religion and its value to humanity.

With this background we can study the question: Where Do Religions Meet?

Let us first consider the foundation of religions, the scriptures. Who wrote them? In some cases people say God wrote them. But we have no evidence of this and become skeptical about a God who writes only for a few people. Then there are the scriptures produced by great minds, without divine inspiration. They had insights into the problems faced by humanity and gave their answers. Many of their statements have sparks of Truth and hence have some attraction for us all. This is the feature which makes the scriptures sacred. It is why people who have no bias or prejudice for other religions feel drawn towards them. A practising Hindu reads the Sermon on the Mount and feels it to be the words of God, akin to what his Rishis have said in the Upanishads.

So far it is universal. Every scripture has features appealing to humanity, seeking the Supreme Truth. They also contain ideas that will help in the conduct of life. Some sections are very ancient and some are later interpolations. It is true that scriptures have God-inspired statements, but that does not necessarily prove that the entire scripture is God's work. There are statements which deal with geography, astronomy, etc., that are incorrect according to our latest scientific discoveries. There are sections which have a special bearing on life at the particular time they were written and which do not relate to our life for all times. To extend the scriptures to all the problems of life and "consult the Vedas when we have lost a cow," as they say in India, is a meaningless superstitious estimate of the importance of scriptures. That kind of devotion generally lends a hand for fanaticism.

In the study of scriptures we should make the distinction between the eternal truths and statements of solution for immediate problems. The Bible contains myths, legends and traditions which show the evolution of human aspirations, but none should take the whole as history. There are, indeed, very few scriptures which assert that they are to be implicitly accepted as God's words and their authority should never be questioned.

What do the scriptures contain? They refer to God, his nature, his activities. But it is very hard to convince a scientist about a creator God because, he says, ideas gathered from scientific investigations have proved that the creation can be explained entirely in a mechanistic manner. It may be that we have not created life, he declares, but that does not by itself create the necessity for a belief in God. Many even feel that the idea of God itself is a creation of man, for filling up some blanks or standing as an answer to questions otherwise left unanswered; and some consider religion as a kind of primitive science.

We have to remember also that every ancient religion claimed dogmatic finality. They all asserted that they held the absolute truth, but all have had to lose their place. All were replaced by new attitudes and new religions. The temples of the Greek gods and goddesses are now only places for sightseers, and the mighty deities of Egypt slumber in abandoned shrines without a votary.

No religion is perfect and it is absurd to believe that this or that religion one day will be the world religion. After all, religions are created by human beings. There is an evolution in human nature and religion has to adapt itself to this condition.

This finally brings us to an important question: If organizations did not exist, how would people know anything about higher values of life? Can we say organized religions are all bad? And what use is there in religion itself?

These questions are all answered only by going back to the prophets and not to the institutions. The Church is of less importance than the Christ. We should go to his words and his life and study all the philosophy and theology that came later only in relation to him and his words. Man, unable to see the Truth that his prophet perceived directly, uses his intellect to find the same teaching. His is not intuitional inspiration, but a creation of his intellect.

So the wonderful teachings of the prophets, which come to us with the freshness of the mountain air, get mixed with the smells and smoke of cities and lose their special features. Whatever might have been the ancient beliefs, it is the prophets, saints and sages who have kept religions alive. It is their words that can stand by us to give the meaning of religion. It is they

who talk of God with conviction and bring us conviction. It is their words that are the scriptures.

These prophets did not create a variety of religions but preached only one ideal. Whenever we get confused and fail to understand the import of religion, we have to go to the source. At once all doubts vanish. We feel, "Here is a person who talks religion *and gives religion.*" It is reliable. It agrees with the words of other prophets.

One should identify oneself with the words of a prophet and follow them as far as it lies in our power. Secondly, we should not forget that churches are meant primarily to foster the spirit of the founders. Buddha did not want his name to be perpetuated as a founder of a religion, but only that his teachings should be followed. From the words and lives of these great souls we can learn much as to where religions meet, as well as the purpose and value of religion itself. With them there is no forced presentation of any dogma. The idea of God, for example. It is not proved or argued in any way. No text is quoted when God is mentioned. He is real to them and no arguments are necessary. How is he known? Directly—by personal contact. Our purpose in life is to know him in the same way.

Listen to the words of India's great prophet of modern times, Ramakrishna:

"You see many stars in the sky but do not find them when the sun rises. Can you say that there are no stars in the heaven during day? So, O man, because you behold not God in the days of your ignorance, say not that there is no God."

And again:

"The Lord of the universe, though One, manifests Himself differently according to the different likings of his worshippers, and each of these has his own view of God which he values most. To some, God is a kind master, a loving father, a sweet smiling mother, a devoted friend..."

According to the prophets, God is an ocean of mercy and ever ready to help the struggling souls. If a person goes towards the Lord, earnestly seeking him, his prayers will be answered.

We are told that the best way of reaching him is by loving him with all our heart, with all our mind and with all our soul. When our love for him is intense, the Lord reveals himself. This love of God should not be given away to worldly objects. It should finally become a passion so that you feel you cannot live

without Him.

Pray to him unceasingly in secret; surrender yourself to him; feel him as your dearest.

Give away all those things that do not help you in going towards the Lord. Get the qualities that will take you to Him. For a mind divided cannot go to Him, just as a thread when it is divided into many strands cannot go through the eye of the needle.

Finally, we should love humanity, love the whole world as a divine manifestation of God. This expansion of the heart will open our eyes to the Lord.

The prophets, by their simple instructions based upon direct experience, make it easy for us to reach God. They all agree on the essentials and it is there, in their words and lives, and there alone, that all religions meet.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is the coming in of love when everything else has gone. It is the soul's desperate struggle for fraternity against the solitariness and loneliness of cosmic vastness. It is a battle between a sword and a cross—one seeking to hurt, the other to heal. It is the determination to believe the best when the worst has been rumored. It is the golden tie that binds after circumstance, disaster, and death have wrenched all visible bonds. It is the deliberate ignoring of the fool and the radiant evoking of the saint in a human soul.

It is the hailing of success without envy that may come to one we love. It is forgiving a hurt without demanding an apology, and the keeping of affection in spite of misunderstanding. It is asking for a privilege to serve without counting cost or demanding a reward. It is closing the eyes to ugliness, the ears to discords, and opening the inner eye and ear of the heart, which understands rather than sees or hears. It is to ask, "What can I give?" rather than, "What shall I receive?"

Dr. W. Waldemar W. Argow
From December 1959 SUNSHINE MAGAZINE

PRAYER AND LIVING

By Mildred Long

Prayer is a part of that vital relationship between God and man in which man gives himself to God and God gives Himself to man.

Why do we pray? We pray because we recognize our insufficiency in this life without God's help. We pray because we have troubles, sorrows, and burdens which we cannot bear alone. Prayer enables us to let go of these and give them to God. We pray most of all because within each soul is a great yearning for God, a homesickness for love and purity and heaven. This can never be satisfied till we have learned to enter into God by His indwelling spirit and to allow God to enter into us and abide.

In our learning to pray, we often begin by asking God for something we want or need: spiritual blessings, material advantages. But it does not take us long to realize that our deepest need is not what God can give us. It is rather a transformation within that will enable us to use what we have for His glory. For, as has been said, "God can not do anything for us except what He does *through* us." The answer to most of our prayers is found only in our being continually transformed into closer likeness to Him in thinking, action, and purpose. Prayer is a continual giving of ourselves to God until His image is formed in us.

At length we reach the point in prayer where we commune with God as friend sith friend. We sit in His presence, feel His love and compassion. In the light of His presence we see ourselves more nearly in the true light, as Isaiah saw himself before the glory of God in the temple. This revelation brings us to a new kind of humility and repentance, resulting in a new kind of purity and holiness.

In this communion we listen for God to speak to us, to tell us what His purpose is for us. We learn to take time every morning to present ourselves before Him and ask for His guidance for the day, committing our lives completely into His care. He tells us whom we should pray for, whom we should try to help, how we should spend our time and our energies.

Gradually we let Him direct our lives. Increasingly we turn to Him for guidance in all small matters. We feel His presence. We know He is ever within us, as the back drop

on the stage is always there. In the flash of a thought He is present and real. Thus we make progress toward "practicing the Presence." This is true life. It is the life Paul knew when he said, "For to me to live *is* Christ."

Unless prayer leads us to this kind of vital and victorious living we have missed its meaning and power.

DIVINE PURPOSE AND HUMAN RESPONSE

Can Man really know anything about the Cosmic blueprint of the Supreme Intelligence as it concerns himself? Has he the capacity to achieve even a glimpse of the mysterious pattern of his real existence and destiny upon this planet and beyond? Can man know the TRUTH that will set him free? Is there a way of inner awakening and realization that will enable him to recognize in this New Age the Divine Purpose so that he may respond and cooperate in fulfilling his human-Divine destiny?

To all these questions the answer is in the affirmative, on the single condition that he obeys the spiritual laws set forth in the world-Scriptures that demand selflessness, humility, purity of heart and mind, and loving self-surrender to the Divine. Although the great majority of people seem at present unwilling or unprepared to accept such a condition, there are indications that certain individuals found in many parts of the world are gradually becoming more enlightened and sensitive to the Spiritual Fires that seek to cleanse human life.

In spite of hindrances such as intellectual materialism, the weakness of the flesh, fear of war and all manner of sufferings, the seeker for Truth is becoming gratefully aware of a new synthesis of metaphysical thought among people of different nations, races and religions which is gradually replacing the old exclusiveness. Truth has come to seem more important than sectarian dogma, and a desire to discover a Divine Purpose to which they may respond, is replacing the wilful outlining of human plans that fail to bring lasting satisfaction.

For the benefit of the casual inquirer into things of the Spirit as well as for the aspirant who has already found the Holy Path, let us use our God-bestowed gifts of creative imagination and intuitive at-

tunement to identify our partial consciousness with the Cosmic Consciousness of the Divine Overseer of the Universe, the Light of the World. By means of that divine illumination it is possible to gaze upon the whole scene of our planet, Earth, with impersonal detachment as from a higher dimension, regarding it and its inhabitants through the single Eye of Deity with its all-embracing vision of a million eons of yesterdays and a million eons of tomorrows in one timeless moment of all-knowingness.

Thus we may trace the brief existence of man upon earth: his primitive state, the present stage of transition, and finally gain a glimpse of the glory of the Man that is to be, the Perfected Man of the Ageless-Wisdom Religions. In this split second in tune with eternity we realize that all the goodness, loving kindness and wise guidance known to the world have come from a single Source, though reflected by many members of the Illuminati. Throughout the ages a procession of spiritual giants have moved amongst men, first in one country, then in another, teaching, guiding, and influencing the rest of mankind by their enlightened thinking for hundreds, even thousands, of years after their departure from the external scene.

Through these divinely appointed vehicles it is possible to discern the Divine Spirit unfolding its Plan of Perfection. The understanding of Divine Wisdom gained from their teachings awakens in other men an inner response to the Divine Purpose, as a flaming torch may start fires wherever it falls. Thus, others besides themselves become aware of the Cosmic Spiritual Overseer of the world, the living light-radiance experienced as Creative Fire in man, the Light-Love Principle illuminating consciousness and revealing man's essential nature as one with the Divine.

It is through these perfected men, the master-saints and sages, that the Light has shone with the greatest radiance. But mankind has tended to deify the Teachers and claim an exclusive revelation for them, which has hidden the great unifying Truth that the Source of all wisdom is One, the Diving Intelligence that so lovingly and patiently has guided humanity throughout all time.

In this New Age the Spirit of God, or good, is being reborn in man. But whereas in the past Divine Guidance has mainly been experienced subconsciously, in this era it

is becoming a vital *conscious* function. As many modern thinkers are saying, man has now reached the point when he can consciously cooperate with the Higher Mind in order to effect his spiritual evolution. He will *consciously* surrender himself to the Spiritual Fires that will cleanse his vision enabling him to discern that the two eyes of the physical senses merely observe temporal and uncertain effects, while the single eye of the Spirit truly sees the timeless inner world of Reality and its infinite spiritual causeless Cause.

Through this inner single eye, or single-minded attention to the Light of Good, men and women of the New Age will come to recognize their rightful place in the Divine Plan and deliberately surrender themselves to serve the deific Will, so realizing their preordained spiritual destiny Radiant transmitters of the living Light—the Wisdom and Power of the Godhead.

— *Joseph Busby, Editor*
THE VOICE

He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he must himself pass.

— *George Herbert*

To endure is greater than to dare;
To tire out hostile fortune;
To be daunted by no difficulty;
To keep heart when all have lost it;
To go through intrigue spotless;
To forego even ambition when the end is gained—
Who can say this is not greatness?

— Thackeray

NOTICES and COMMENTS

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE. We wish to remind our readers of our Tenth Anniversary issue. If anyone would like to contribute to this special number please send in your contributions at the earliest possible date. We invite readers' views on the development of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER, and how it may have benefitted our readers over the years. Recollections of the early days, and of Carl Allison Evans, our founder, in particular, will be welcomed by the staff.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS. We call attention to an important letter that has just been sent out to our Fellowship group (Advisors etc.) containing information and developments bearing on the Anniversary issue and other subjects. We hope this letter will be read carefully and will evoke the kind of response that it invites from everyone who reads it.... We are proud to report that new writers are appearing more and more in our pages. In addition, new subscriptions and genuine expressions of interest are arriving from many places overseas. All this good news is gathering momentum just when we are celebrating our tenth official birthday....It gives us pleasure to mention that Dr. W. J. Thompson was honored on January 28, 1960 by the Department of the Ministry of the General Council of the Congregational Churches, in recognition of the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the Christian Ministry. We extend our congratulations to Dr. Thompson, and in admiration of a life nobly spent we wish him many more years of service in his long, vigorous and dedicated career.

BUDDHIST SCRIPTURE. This month we resume our practice of incorporating in the center pages a feature presentation of some aspect of various world faiths. For April we have printed extensive excerpts from the Dhammapada, consisting of direct discourses given 2500 years ago by Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. Anyone even moderately familiar with Buddha and his life recognizes that he was one of the greatest personalities of all time. It is a distinct privilege for us to print two pages of the actual utterances of so great a prophet. The Dhammapada, it should be noted, enjoys

a high and enduring reputation the world over as one of the few authentic religious masterpieces of the ages.

CONTRIBUTORS. As indicated above, several new writers appear in this issue. Among the newcomers is Dawn Edwards, a member of the Baha'i faith and author of the recent work, JOURNEY INTO CONSCIOUSNESS. Her simple and sincerely written article on prayer, "Untapped Fountain," on page 12 of this issue, makes an auspicious beginning in her association with FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER. We look forward to printing another equally inspiring article by her later in the year and, if possible, to review her book in the next number.,, Also represented this month for the first time is Joseph Busby, the brilliant editor of the British metaphysical publication, THE VOICE. We recommend this quarterly newspaper to anyone seriously interested in, and receptive to, the more advanced trends in modern religious thinking. We referred to it in our last issue and gave the address at that time. Anyone desiring further information about this exciting British publication should communicate with us... We are happy to welcome once again to the pages of FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER Mildred Long with her fine article, "Prayer and Living" on page 22 and her inspiring poem, "Revelation," on page 8....Despite a current illness and a crowded schedule, Edward C. Caswell has favored us again with another of his characteristic drawings, illustrating the poem on page 1 by Josepha Murray Emms, also a newcomer to our pages... We are fortunate in printing some verses from a manuscript collection, donated some years ago to Fellowship in Prayer, of the late Ae'lis Churchill Chaphe. It is rare that we or any magazine are able to publish a great religious lyric, but it is our opinion that "Spring Resurrection," featured on this month's back cover, merits this description.

EDITOR RETURNS. Your editor is happy to report that after a two month's leave of absence due to illness, good health has returned to him, and he is now back at his editorial post. He wishes to thank his associates for ably carrying on the work in his absence.

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"SPRING RESURRECTION"

Sweet notes of music
Coming your way,
God's winged messenger
With a roundelay—
Resurrection from sorrow,
Death and the tomb,
A garden of Peace
Where tall lilies bloom;
Life after death,
Crown above cross,
Joy after agony,
Gain after loss,
Easter and beauty
After sad Calvary.

— *Ae'lis Churchill Chaphe*

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